

difficulties have deterred it, no obstacles have turned it aside. But, large as is the capacity of the human mind—daring as are its flights, there is a limit beyond which they may not extend. It may deal with the visible and the material: but, when it attempts to grapple with the unseen and the spiritual, it must soon discover its utter feebleness. It can discover the qualities of matter, and the laws by which the movements of the material universe are carried on. But, in the words of that record of truth of which we have been speaking, “Who can, by searching, find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?” Natural reason may lead us to conclude that the magnificent structure of that fabric of which we behold so small a part, exhibiting, as it does, so many traces of wisdom and beneficence, must have had a wise and beneficent Creator. But reason can tell us little of His character and perfections. And hence we learn that the most enlightened nations of antiquity, when left to the guidance of their own unaided mental powers, in forming their notions of the Divine Being, “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” It is to that “Word which is Truth” that we must come, if we would learn the true character of “the God with whom we have to do.” Again, we know by our consciousness that there is a principle within us that thinks and moves and wills,—a principle that is distinct from that earthly tabernacle in which it is lodged; but, as to what shall be the ultimate destiny of that spiritual principle, natural reason can give us no certain information. Shall it perish with the body? or shall it survive the ruin of its temporary abode? Heathen philosophers have deemed the immortality of the soul a possibility, and some have maintained it to be a probability; but none knew it to be a certainty. And even where it was received as true by those who had no light from heaven to guide them, the doctrine of a future state was so mixed up with the most absurd and childish fables that it exerted no practical influence upon human conduct. But “life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.” What human reason was unable to discover, has been clearly made known to us by that “Word which is Truth.” From it we learn that that divine principle that is placed within us perishes not with the earthly tabernacle in which it is lodged; that when its temporary dwelling place falls into ruins, that deathless principle passes into the world of spirits; that there it enters upon an endless existence of ineffable bliss or inconceivable woe, according as it has departed from this life purified from transgression or polluted by sin.

But further, there is a conscience within us that accuses and condemns us as sinners in the sight of God. And there is a momentous question that presses itself upon the attention—“How shall a guilty sinner find acceptance with a Being of inflexible justice and unspotted holiness?” Now this is a question that conscience may prompt, but which nature cannot answer. The answer to it forms one of those mysteries that are too profound for the human mind, with all its boasted powers, adequately to explore. We must search for it in that “Word which is Truth.” And there we do not need to search in vain. There we find the revelation of that wondrous plan whereby, in harmony with all the attributes of the divine character, sin is punished, and the sinner pardoned. The great God of heaven and earth, who, because of our sins, is justly offended, instead of pouring out His wrath upon the head of the guilty, “has laid upon His own Son the iniquity of us all.” He, “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person,” left the bosom of the Father and the throne of eternity, came into this world, took upon Him the nature of fallen man, and poured out his soul unto death upon the cross, as an atonement for our sins. Thus “God is in Christ, reconciling a lost world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.” I have spoken of this already, but I recur to it again for the purpose of impressing upon your minds that this, the grand truth of revelation, is one that could never have entered into the mind of